

Abstract

Objectives: To identify the prevalence and patterns of dietary supplement use in Trinidad and Tobago.

Method: Survey data was collected from 120 participants from the 27th October -3rd November using a convenience sampling method. The respondents were recruited from various locations throughout Trinidad, including members of two gyms. The data collection instrument used to obtain information was a 29-item self-completed questionnaire. SPSS for Windows version 12.0 was used to produce both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: More than three quarters of the respondents' (75.8%) reported using dietary supplements. The most frequently reported supplements used were multivitamins (44.2%), vitamin C (29.3%) and B-complex vitamins (29.2%). Use of herbals was found to be under-reported. Supplement use between gym users and nonusers was not significantly different. Two useful predictors of multivitamin use were perception of health (OR=.015, CI=1.184, 4.673) and body mass index (BMI) (OR=0.029, CI=.311, .939). Physical activity had a positive association with vitamin C and multivitamin use (OR=3.455, CI=1.353, 8.820). The most common reasons for supplement use were for general health (38.5%) and to complement one's lifestyle and diet (33.0%). The majority of participants also believed that dietary supplements provide health benefits.

Conclusion: There is widespread use of dietary supplements in Trinidad and users are quite knowledgeable about their benefits and limitations. More extensive research can provide greater insight on the subject